

## THE SITE OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY.

At the opening meeting of the Royal Institute of Architects, on Monday evening, the 15th inst., a paper on the National Gallery was read, as we announced would be the case, wherein the writer advocated its retention in the present site, and the erection of additional buildings in the place of the workhouse at the back. The wisdom or otherwise of this rested on the question of the injury caused to the pictures by the smoke of London, and on that point a discussion was raised. The artist speakers were of opinion that greater injury was not done by town air than country air. It was resolved that the discussion should be resumed on the 29th, when we hope that other artists will attend and give the Institute the benefit of their opinion. We shall return to the subject.

## OXFORD ARCHITECTURAL SOCIETY.

The first meeting of this society, during the present term, took place Nov. 3. The Principal of Brasenose in the chair. A letter was read from Mr. G. Mackerness on the subject of the restoration of the church of Nicholas Ferrar, and some ecclesiastical extracts were made from a communication received from Australia.

Mr. Plenderleath, B.A. then read a paper "On some Architectural Principles derivable from Anatomy." The position of Architecture, he said, among the arts and sciences, was that of a bond between them all, seeing that it made each of them to observe its interests. But to anatomy the obligation was not so often acknowledged, though in the cylindrical form of the long bones he thought that we might see the principle of the tubular bridge; in the roussoir shaped bones of the foot, that of the arch; and in the human cranium, that of the dome! Mr. Plenderleath exhibited two skulls, one of which was dissected, by means of which he pointed out the analogy between the mode of girding or cramping the stones of a dome, and the strengthening of the cranium by means of the spheroid bones, which acted as a tie-beam to keep the whole together.

Mr. Plenderleath proceeded to the analogy between the construction of the arch and that of the tarsus of the foot, and he then passed on to discuss at some length the question as to what was the best form of roof for sound as illustrated by the organisation of the mouth.

## GAS.

*Swindon.*—The Gas and Coke Company here appear to have now manifested a willingness to be influenced, at least to some extent, by the local Gas Consumers' Association, inasmuch as they have reduced the price of their gas from 8s. 4d. to 7s. (a very trifling and inadequate reduction certainly), and have issued an address to the Association, in which they state that, considering the perishable nature of their property, the expense of efficient working, and the probability of science superseding it altogether, they do not think even 10 per cent. an unfair profit, whereas they have only averaged 6½ per cent. which, they submit, for such a precarious property, cannot be considered too high. Now, we quite agree with the company that 6½ per cent. is not too high; but what are we to infer from this? That if the price be further reduced, so will the dividend? Assuredly not; but in all probability precisely the contrary, as we have seen and again proved, in the columns of THE BUILDER, from the Parliamentary statistical returns of the gas companies themselves. By further reducing their price, not to a great extent suddenly, but to a great extent gradually,—beginning, however, with something considerably more than 1s. 4d.—they will, to a certainty, immensely increase their consumption, and ultimately raise their profits beyond 6½ per cent. which they are not likely to diminish even in the outset. It is a false inference, therefore, altogether, that, because they have only 6½ per cent. at 8s. 4d. they would have less at 4s. 8d. Arguments such as these ought to be urged, and, in fact, could easily be demonstrated to the company, who have further manifested a disposition to

accede to reasonable terms by allowing consumers to purchase their fittings from whom they please. We agree, however, with the chairman of the Consumers' Association, Mr. Wheeler, that 7s. cannot be expected to satisfy the public, even for the present; but we believe the company are sincere in their belief or fear that it would be inconsistent with their pecuniary interests to make any greater reduction, in which fear they are completely mistaken. A subscription, headed by the vicar, has been set on foot to forward the determination of the consumers, who now mean to advertise for proposals from gas contractors.

*Birmingham.*—The reduction in price by the Birmingham and Staffordshire Company has been advertised. The terms are,—3s. 10d. per 1,000 feet, to all consumers under 25,000 per quarter; 3s. 4d. to all above 25,000 and under 100,000; 2s. 10½d. to all consumers of 100,000 and upwards, per quarter, commencing from 1st October, 1852, for cash payment. Where the parties do not pay promptly, the terms will be 4s., 3s., 6d. and 3s. respectively.

*New Brompton and Gillingham.*—The first stone of a gas-work has been laid for the supply of these places with gas light. The works are being erected by the Provincial and Continental Gas Company, and are being constructed under the superintendence of Mr. S. J. Rickson, of Chatham, agreeably to plans designed by Mr. Culyer, gas engineer. The gas, it is said, will be manufactured by a new process, whereby its cost price is considerably reduced, and a larger quantity of gas of greater illuminating power is obtained. It is intended to supply the gas at 5d. per hundred, or 4s. 2d. per thousand cubic feet.

## THE SOCIETY OF ANTIQUARIES.

The first meeting of this Society, fixed for the 19th, is postponed until the 25th, in consequence of the funeral of the Duke of Wellington, and on that night the proposal of Mr. Lott, to rescind the resolution passed last year, reducing the subscription from four guineas to two, will be brought under consideration. During the recess Sir Fortunatus Dwaris has published a letter to the Fellows, urging moderation, and suggesting, as a compromise, that the subscription should be three guineas. Mr. Pettigrew has issued a second edition of his letter with a new preface, and Mr. John Bruce has published a second pamphlet in support of the reduction. For argument, however, the matter stands exactly where it did before the law was passed, and we sincerely hope that the motion for repealing will not be carried, and that a fair trial will be given to it. As our readers know, the reduction seems to us desirable, but even apart from this, it surely cannot be convenient or right that a law passed after full consideration and discussion, even although by not a large majority, should be immediately afterwards repealed without trial.

## THEATRES AND MUSIC.

*Drury-lane.*—*Jullien's Concerts.*—Large audiences have rewarded M. Jullien's exertions to provide cheap good music for the metropolitans. The body of the theatre has been renovated, and the stage-part fitted up under Mr. Gye's direction, with one of those tasteful decorations which he has made his own. The glass curtain shines with undiminished lustre, and chandeliers to accord with it have been put up without stint. Madame Anna Zerr, a clever clarinet player (M. Wuille), and two perfect violinists (the brothers Mollinhaus), are amongst the additions to the ordinary *ensemble*. The band never went better. Those who want evidence of the loyalty of an English audience should go to Jullien's: though a little opprobrious, with an undercurrent of fun, the exhibition of it is exciting in the highest degree.

The North Shields Theatre has been rebuilt, Mr. G. A. Middlemass, architect. Mr. W. Beverley, of the Lyceum, designed the decorations. Mr. Percival Simms executed them. According to our informant, the style adopted is of the Renaissance; the proscenium arch,

box, and gallery tier, are supported by Corinthian capitals, pictured with white and gold. The front of the boxes and gallery is divided into panels, enriched with fret-work and mouldings. The pit is continued underneath the boxes, entrance to which is by the east front, where there are large outlet doors at the side, and these are so constructed, that pressure from the inside will not prevent them from being easily opened at any time. The boxes, which are reached by so easy staircase, are all cushioned, and have French polished backs, the whole being divided into stalls, with doors to each. The exterior of the theatre has reticulated rustic dressings, string courses, massive doorways, with pillars and entablatures, surmounted by the royal arms.

*Diorama of Hindostan.*—This very interesting Diorama, which, when first open, was placed high in the numerous list of works of a similar kind, is now again open to the public, and should be visited by all who have not yet seen it. Mr. Philip Philpotts, Mr. Louis Haghe, and Mr. Knell co-operated in its production from sketches on the spot, and the result is a series of pictures as interesting for their artistic merit as for the spots they represent.

## BRITISH ARCHEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION.

The first evening meeting of this society took place on Wednesday, the 10th of November, when a large attendance of members, a table covered with books and objects of antiquity presented to the society, and a long list of new associates, comprising the names of the Earl of Scarborough, Lord Edwin Hill, Mr. G. H. Vernon, M.P.; Mr. Maunier Norton, M.P.; Mr. Barton, M.P. &c. &c. afforded most gratifying evidence of the progress of the association. Amongst the exhibitions were a most interesting example of the visard bascinet of the early part of the reign of Edward III. and a remarkably large and peculiarly formed tilting-helmet of the close of the fifteenth century, both by Mr. S. Pratt. The former head-piece presented the unique feature of having the email or neck-piece of chain-mail still depending.

Mr. Syer Cuming exhibited a habergeon of similar chain, and read a paper on that species of defensive armour. Several Roman vases and patera discovered near Dover were exhibited and presented to the society by Mr. Orton, through Mr. T. J. Briggs, and some fine specimens of Samian ware, lately dug up at Ribchester, were also presented by the Rev. Thomas Hogo, of St. Bonolph's, Bishopsgate; drawings of various antiquities, by Mr. Bridger, Mr. Newton, Mr. Baigent, &c. The meeting concluded with the reading by Mr. Lynch of three original and interesting letters, illustrative of the abdication of James II.;—the first being from Pope Innocent XI. to Louis XIV.; the second, the answer of Louis to the Pope; and the third, a most graphic account of the flight of the Queen Mary Beatrix with the infant Prince of Wales from London, by the Countess Monticucilli, an Italian lady in her Majesty's household.

**FLOODING IN THE THAMES AND DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY.**—Another of those uses which every now and then rise above all the usual barriers on both sides of the river within metropolitan bounds, but especially on the Surrey side, has just occurred, with an immense destruction of property, in Bermondsey, and Rotherhithe, and particularly in Lambeth, Vauxhall, and as far as Putney, on that side of the river, and in Hungerford Market, Temple Gardens, Great Scotland-yard, and the Adelphi on the northern side of the river. The very same thing will doubtless occur to a few years at furthest, and again and again, as it has already done, unless some supervision of the river walls and other barriers be instituted. The cost of such supervision would be as nothing compared with this periodical destruction of property, even were the risk of human life unworthy of consideration, and the prevention of accident not always possible.